

1. Toldot HaArizal (Sefer HaAri, 219) – Celebrating at Mt. Meron at the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

In the days of our master (Rav Yosef Karo) they agreed that the Jews would not make a big celebration on Lag B'Omer at the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. It seemed to our master and his Beit Din that it was degrading that people ate and danced there. [This decision was] written but not signed. That night our master dreamed about Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who said to him that a great plague would befall the people because of this decision. It was his wish that they celebrate on the anniversary of his death. The following day he tore up the decision.

בימי מרן (ר' יוסף קארו) הסכימו שלא יעשו ישראל הערביים מחול בל"ג בעומר על ציון רשב"י. ונראה למרן וב"ד שהוא זלזול שאוכלים ומרקדים, ונכתבה ולא נחתמה. בלילה חלם מרן עם הרשב"י וא"ל שתבא מגפה גדולה בעבור זו ההסכמה, כי רצונו שישמחו בהילולא, ולמחר קרע את ההסכמה.

The following incident is included by Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz in his well-known work, Shnai Luchos HaBris. The account was written by Rabbi Shlomo AlkevitZ (16th c. Kabbalist who lived in Tzfat, Israel; author of Lecha Dodi and a contemporary of Rabbi Yosef Karo).

The pious Rabbi Karo and I, and our students resolved to remain awake all night on the first night of Shavuot. And so we were able not to waste a single second of learning Torah. And this is the order which we studied. First, selected portions of the Five Books of Moshe, Psalms, Song of Songs, the Book of Ruth.... All this with intense concentration, in a loud, melodious voice. Then we began to carefully study the Talmud. And when we had completed two tractates, we heard a loud voice, and even the neighbours heard this but did not understand what was being said. And the sweet sound of this mysterious voice grew louder, and we fell on our faces, and no one amongst us had the courage to look up to see from where this voice came. And the voice began to speak, and said:

“Listen, my loved ones, the loveliest of the lovely, peace be to you, and may you be happy, and may your descendants be happy - both in this world and in the world to come. For you have endeavored to crown me on this night, since my crown has been rolling in dirt in recent times, and there has been no one to comfort me. And you have returned the crown to its rightful place. Be strong, my beloved ones, rejoice, and know that you are the elite, and you have merited being privy to the Palace of the King. And the sound of your Torah learning has ascended in front of the Almighty. And all the Angels have been silenced. And all the celestial beings, along with the King of Kings, are listening to the utterances of your mouths. And I, an angelic representative of the Almighty, have been sent to speak to you, to compliment and encourage you. And had there been more people present with you, I would have been able to reveal more. May you and your descendants be blessed for ignoring the demands of sleep, not like those others who are slumbering at this holy time. And don’t stop learning Torah for even a second, because the thread of God’s grace surrounds you, and your Torah learning is dear to the Almighty.”

And when we heard this we all stood up and declared in a loud and trembling voice, “Blessed is the name of the majesty of His Kingdom forever.” And we all were amazed, in great joy at what we had heard, and also in great sorrow at hearing of the sad state that the Shechinah was in because of our sins. And we returned to our learning and we didn’t waste a second until the daylight. And then we went to immerse in the Mikva before Shacharis and we saw several of our colleagues who had not been present and we told them what had occurred and they were distraught that because they had not stayed up that night, they had missed this great event. And then they said, “What if tonight, the second night of Shavuot, we repeat the learning with a larger crowd?” and we decided to do so. And on the second night, even earlier than the first night, as soon as we read the portion of the Shema, we heard the voice of our beloved, as the night before... And I swear, and Heaven and Earth are my witnesses, that this is not even a hundredth of the wonders that we saw and heard...

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